

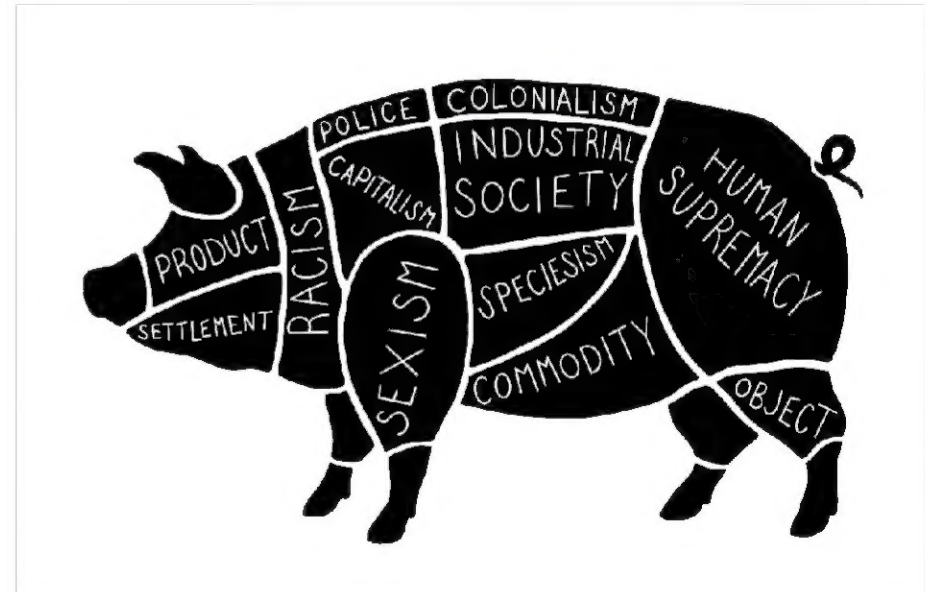
I suggest that the recognition of animals as colonial subjects has been absent from Indigenous Studies. That is, contemporary decolonial thought has yet to engage with a politics of animality that not only recalls “traditional” and/or “ceremonial” human-animal relations, but is also accountable to animal subjectivities and futurities outside settler colonialism and within a project of decolonization. That is, decolonial thought cannot, for example, demand the repatriation of land as an ecofeminist praxis while simultaneously advocating for hunting as a recreational activity precisely because hunting has been weaponized as speciesism to normalize the killability of animals for human ends. Here, I propose a re-centering of animality through Indigenous cosmologies and epistemologies (specifically Mi’kmaq and Cree) to propose a decolonial animal ethic. [...]

Several of the recommendations proposed by the animal liberation movement are thus applicable to decolonization. For example, rejecting animal experimentation, disrupting the commodification of animal bodies, and abolishing animal agriculture are gestures that can be deployed as anti-colonial gestures that reify decolonial futurities insofar as these forms of knowledge production, capitalism, and food culture sustain the settler state.[...]

...settler colonialism wants to produce animal bodies as commodities embedded in a global economy of reiterated deathliness. Said different, animal bodies that are inserted into capitalist spaces of commodity production are always already scheduled for death to be consumed as meat, clothing, scientific data, and so forth.[...]

Similar to the ways in which Indigenous peoples can undergo a violent process through which we rid our colonial mentalities, I argue that animals can be liberated from their colonized subjecthood through an aided “process of desubjectification”. That is, thinking through animality as an infrastructure of decolonization re-positions animal bodies as agents of anti-colonial resurgence. They can consequently engender “forms of energy that are capable of engaging the forces that keep [Indigenous people and animals] tied to [a] colonial mentality and reality”. Settler colonialism has therefore required the normalization of speciesism within Indigenous communities to obfuscate the radicality of Indigenous-animal relations. In that sense, recalling the representation of animals in Indigenous cosmologies/oral traditions and unsettling speciesism as a “colonial mentality” must be prioritized in decolonial thought.[...]

Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects: (Re)Locating Animality in Decolonial Thought



Billy-Ray Belcourt

Abstract

In this text, I argue that animal domestication, speciesism, and other modern human-animal interactions in North America are possible because of and through the erasure of Indigenous bodies and the emptying of Indigenous lands for settler-colonial expansion. That is, we cannot address animal oppression or talk about animal liberation without naming and subsequently dismantling settler colonialism and white supremacy as political machinations that require the simultaneous exploitation and/or erasure of animal and Indigenous bodies. I begin by re-framing animality as a politics of space to suggest that animal bodies are made intelligible in the settler imagination on stolen, colonized, and re-settled Indigenous lands.

Thinking through Andrea Smith's logics of white supremacy, I then re-center anthropocentrism as a racialized and speciesist site of settler coloniality to re-orient decolonial thought toward animality. To critique the ways in which Indigenous bodies and epistemologies are at stake in neoliberal re-figurings of animals as settler citizens, I reject the colonial politics of recognition developed in Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka's recent monograph, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford University Press 2011) because it militarizes settler-colonial infrastructures of subjecthood and governmentality. I then propose a decolonized animal ethic that finds legitimacy in Indigenous cosmologies to argue that decolonization can only be reified through a totalizing disruption of those power apparatuses (i.e., settler colonialism, anthropocentrism, white supremacy, and neoliberal pluralism) that lend the settler state sovereignty, normalcy, and futurity insofar as animality is a settler-colonial particularity.

"The decolonization of settler colonial forms needs to be imagined before it is practiced." —Lorenzo Veracini [1] (p. 108).

1. Introduction: Critical Animal Studies and Decolonizing Decolonization

It is my contention that Critical Animal Studies (CAS) and mainstream animal activism have failed to center an analysis of settler colonialism and therefore operate within "the givenness of the white-supremacist, settler state" [2] (p. 10). This theoretical absence is thus a form of colonial violence wherein indigeneity is invisibilized, wherein the Indigenous body is re-made into a site of modern impossibility to make possible the re-shaping of animal subjectivities as settler-colonial imaginaries. However, I am not concerned with decolonizing an academic field imagined through settler modes of knowledge production. Although some CAS scholars have proposed a framework of "total liberation" through which all social justice activism addresses colonial and speciesist oppression, they have framed decolonization as a "responsibility for all who fight for social justice" without centering indigeneity or calling for both the

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Further reading:

- **Veganism as Anti-Colonial Praxis: A Collection of Indigenous Vegan Perspectives**

- **Veganism and Mi'kmaw Legends** by Margaret Robinson

- **Kaimangatanga: Māori Perspectives on Veganism and Plant-based Kai** by Kirsty Dunn



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destruction of the settler state and a repatriation of land to Indigenous communities [3] (p. 59). Here, a decolonial theory that is not accountable to Indigenous politics as a site of colonial rupture erases the referent (the Indigenous body) through which decolonization was mobilized in the first place. This misrecognition of the Indigenousness of decolonization not only integrates decolonial thought into a discursive space of sameness (as merely a social justice project and not one of Indigenous life-makingness), but also colonizes it by re-centering and therefore re-subjectifying the settler as an acting body—that is, as a body that deploys decolonial politics without unsettling the colonial history through which settler-colonial life-ways are already Indigenous death-ways. For instance, in *Defining Critical Animal Studies*, Anthony J. Nocella II et al. argue that CAS must advance “a holistic understanding of the commonality of oppressions... in favor of decentralizing and democratizing society at all levels and on a global basis” [4] (p. xxvii). This rendering of “oppressions” as commensurable, however, obfuscates the singularity of settler colonialism insofar as its irreducible elements are the disappearance of indigeneity and the sedimentation of settler life-ways as normative. That is, “decolonization wants something different than [other] forms of justice” and is far too often subsumed into “other civil and human-rights based social justice projects” [5] (p. 2). Further, Nocella II’s animal ethic as an ethic that democratizes nonetheless secures settler sovereignty by merely making the settler state less oppressive (if that is even possible) and is thus antithetical to decolonization.

Decolonization is therefore “not accountable to settlers or settler futurity” insofar as it calls for the destruction of the settler state and its associated modes of operability [5] (p. 35). In other words, decolonization does not exist as a process through which settlers are encouraged to participate in “self-transformation” [3] (p. 52), it is not a politics of allyship, nor is it “a generic term for struggles against oppressive conditions” [5] (p. 21). Although radical vestiges of CAS have deployed prison abolition, anti-capitalism, and anti-racism as analytics through which an intersectional animal ethic is evidenced, I argue that there are fundamental distinctions between the politics of intersectionality and decolonization. Intersectionality, for example, grounds critical theory in difference and consequently stabilizes the settler identity insofar as it seeks reform from within—a “within” that is both embodied and institutionalized (i.e., through settler identity politics and legislative reform). Decolonization, however, cannot exist within these fleshy and architectural spaces of whiteness through which Indigenous politico-economic structures are anachronized and the totality of decolonization is rendered unimaginable. Instead, decolonization must problematize the logic of multiculturalism that secures the settler subject position. Whereas intersectionality, detached from its grounding in black feminist thought, has become an ahistorical theoretical universality insofar as it has been re-deployed as a social justice credential, decolonization is always and only rooted in lived experiences of indigeneity, in unbecoming a site of settler colonialism.

In their critique of the ways in which academia (as an infrastructure of whiteness) has settled and appropriated decolonization, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang argue that internal colonialism requires “the biopolitical and geopolitical management of people, land, flora, and fauna within the ‘domestic’ borders of the imperial nation” [my emphasis] [5] (pp. 4–5).

However, Tuck and Yang do not position the animal body as the fleshy material(ity) against and through which settler colonialism is materialized insofar as the oppression of animals and, as I will argue, the (settler-colonial) politicization of animality progresses the settler state. I therefore contend that we cannot dismantle speciesism or re-imagine human-animal relations in the North American context without first or simultaneously dismantling settler colonialism and re-theorizing domesticated animal bodies as colonial subjects that must be centered in decolonial thought. To re-figure speciesism and neoliberalized animal subjectivities as vehicles for settler-colonial continuity, I consider the ways in which an animal ethic is important to decolonial thought by re-framing animality as a politics of space and introducing anthropocentrism to Andrea Smith’s theorizations of the logics of white supremacy. I then reject the colonial politics of animal recognition proposed by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka in *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* to scrutinize contemporary re-configurations of animality within settler-colonial infrastructures of being. Here, I suggest that *Zoopolis* is representative of a neoliberal trend in CAS wherein the re-construction of animality is only conceivable through settler-colonial epistemologies. However, to refrain from subsuming animal ethics within a discourse of anthropocentric struggle, I conclude by considering Indigenous cosmologies to offer a decolonial ethic that accounts for animal bodies as resurgent bodies.

It is thus my contention that animal domestication, speciesism, and other modern human-animal interactions are only possible because of and through the historic and ongoing erasure of Indigenous bodies and the emptying of Indigenous lands for settler-colonial expansion. For that reason, we cannot address animal oppression or talk about animal liberation without naming settler colonialism and white supremacy as political mechanisms that require the simultaneous exploitation or destruction of animal and Indigenous bodies. Indeed, the domestication of animal bodies as colonial and capitalist subjects always already reifies “hegemonic forms of [settler and speciesist] power” [6] (p. 84).

Here, animals are “always being interpellated by [spatial] recognition” to deploy animal bodies as settler-colonial utilities [7] (p. 453). I propose a “politics of space” to conceptualize the ways in which settler moves to knowing and/or constructing animal bodies and/or subjectivities (re)locates animals within

be forwarded. Here, decolonization is not only beneficial to animals because it demands the dismantling of all settler-colonial infrastructures (including those that produce and progress speciesism), but would also require a re-signification of animal subjects and human-animal relations through the non-speciesist and interdependent models of animality envisioned in Indigenous cosmologies. This, of course, is contingent upon the willingness of Indigenous peoples (and our allies) to commit to decolonized animal futurities.

Acknowledgments

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of” settlers [14] (p. 73), I contend that contemporary domesticated animals must first be excised from their colonized subjectivities to be subsequently re-oriented within ecologies of decolonial subjecthood and re-signified through Indigenous cosmologies. Similar to the ways in which Indigenous peoples can undergo a violent process through which we rid our colonial mentalities, I argue that animals can be liberated from their colonized subjecthood through an aided “process of desubjectification” [7] (p. 456). That is, thinking through animality as an infrastructure of decolonization re-positions animal bodies as agents of anti-colonial resurgence. They can consequently engender “forms of energy that are capable of engaging the forces that keep [Indigenous people and animals] tied to [a] colonial mentality and reality” [23] (p. 179). Settler colonialism has therefore required the normalization of speciesism within Indigenous communities to obfuscate the radicality of Indigenous-animal relations. In that sense, recalling the representation of animals in Indigenous cosmologies/oral traditions and unsettling speciesism as a “colonial mentality” must be prioritized in decolonial thought. Here, it is important to note that the animal and the Indigenous subject are not commensurable colonial subjects insofar as their experiences of colonization are different—a decolonial animal ethic must therefore account for these differences.

5. Conclusion: Settler Colonial Particularities

Indigenous Studies and Settler Colonial Studies continue to acknowledge and deconstruct the “specializations” of settler colonialism, including the ways in which “settler sovereignty imposes sexuality, legality, raciality, language, religion, and property” onto Indigenous communities as an assimilationist tactic [5] (p. 21).

However, what imaginaries and subjectivities are foreclosed when our politics of decolonization is always already anthropocentric? I propose a re-locating of animal ontologies within decolonial thought that engages critically with the ways in which settler colonialism objectivizes animal bodies as one of many intersecting settler colonial particularities. That is, I have attempted to demonstrate that settler colonialism is invested in animality and therefore re-makes animal bodies into colonial subjects to normalize settler modes of political life (i.e., territorial acquisition, anthropocentrism, capitalism, white supremacy, and neoliberal pluralism) that further displace and disappear Indigenous bodies and epistemologies. In that sense, decolonization is not possible without centering an animal ethic.

Although I am sympathetic to the ways in which CAS and mainstream animal activism have attempted to re-figure animality outside speciesist logics, I have argued that these re-figurings operate within spaces of settler coloniality that are always and only colonizing gestures that disrupt decolonial futurities precisely because a critique of the settler subject position in relation to animals has yet to

particular geographic and architectural spaces. The insertion of animal bodies into specific industrialized, colonized, and vacated spaces (such as (factory) farms, urban apartments, and “emptied” forests) is therefore the gesture through which animality is made intelligible and material in the settler imagination. In other words, I argue that colonial animalities are inseparable from the colonized spaces in which they are subjected and labored. Here, a decolonial animal ethic must also be a land ethic insofar as the repatriation of land to Indigenous peoples would logically require a re-articulation of animality.

This falsely naturalized relationship between the animal body and colonized spaces must then become a point of decolonial intervention. That is, settler colonialism itself operates through a militant and racist politics of territoriality whereby Indigenous lands are physically and symbolically evacuated to be re-made into settler spaces [8] (p. 7). This re-making, according to Taiaiake Alfred, is prefigured by the doctrine of *terra nullius* in which Turtle Island is imagined to be devoid of ownership prior to European contact [9] (p. 45). Precisely because “decolonization... must involve the repatriation of land” to Indigenous communities [5] (p. 7), the disassembling of the settler state requires the abolition of the spaces in which speciesism occurs (i.e., slaughterhouses, research laboratories, butcher shops, zoos, and amusement parks). Factory farms, for example, are violent colonial geographies wherein the animal body is subject to surveillance and death to produce capital/commodity products and sustain carnivorous food cultures [10] (p. 123). It would thus be anthropocentric to ignore animality if our politics of decolonization is to disrupt all colonized spaces and liberate all colonized subjects.

Although mainstream animal activists have called for the eradication of factory farms and slaughterhouses, they mobilize, I argue, through a politics of morality that cannot disrupt capitalist production on a large scale. The absence of decolonial politics in the animal liberation movement is further evident in the ways in which activists assist the settler state to invisibilize “the work [Indigenous peoples] have been doing to protect other animal species” [11] and have therefore reproduced the colonial mythology in which indigeneity is incommensurable with social justice ideologies. Insofar as decolonization is a violent and totalizing gesture that displaces the mechanisms governing (settler) colonialism [12] (p. 1), those spaces for animal activism that center whiteness thus further impossibilize decolonization and leave in tact the power relation that makes speciesism possible [13] (p. 142). A decolonial animal ethic must instead center both indigeneity and animality as sites of anti-colonial possibility.

2. Anthropocentrism, Settler Colonialism, and White Supremacy

In “Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy”, Andrea Smith argues that the “three primary logics of white supremacy” are slaveability/anti-black racism, genocide, and orientalism, which anchor capitalism, colonialism, and

war respectively [2] (p. 1). Smith later suggests that “the consequence of not developing a critical apparatus for intersecting all the logics of white supremacy... is that it prevents us from imagining an alternative” to the settler-colonial and racial state [2] (pp. 5–6). To document the colonization of animal bodies, I suggest that anthropocentrism is the fourth logic of white supremacy.

According to Donaldson and Kymlicka, anthropocentrism is a “moral theory that takes humanity as its standard”—that is, it is a making of “humanness” that circumscribes the “essence” of “‘being human’ or of ‘humanity’” [14] (p. 33). This rendering of humanness as the objective subject position is, however, a speciesist (and patriarchal) project when personhood is secured as that which relates “to man and mankind” [my emphasis] [15]. Anthropocentrism, I argue, is therefore the anchor of speciesism, capitalism, and settler colonialism. This logic holds that settlers (as reifications of whiteness) are always already entitled to domesticated animal bodies as sites of commodity/food production, eroticism, violence, and/or companionship; a reality that is possible because of a history of animal injury and forced human-animal proximity [16] (p. 417). Just as Smith’s original logics intersect through deployments of settler sovereignty and racism, it is my contention that speciesism intersects with the logic of genocide to secure a capitalist project of animal agriculture that requires the disappearance of Indigenous bodies from the land [5] (p. 9). If settler colonialism is to remain both “territorially acquisitive in perpetuity” and the only positionality through which a body is entitled to politically act against (or through) animals [8] (p. 152), then the animal body must always be interpellated as a colonial subject—that is, as a body subject to settler colonial (mis)recognition.

Anthropocentrism is then a politics of space whereby land is commodified and privatized for animal agriculture. Although this unsustainable food system uses approximately thirty percent of the Earth’s land mass and accounts for “nearly half of all water used in the United States” [17], decolonial thought has yet to deconstruct the settler-colonial, anthropocentric, and capitalist logics governing animal agriculture that assume the facticity of settler colonialism.

The logic of anthropocentrism is also militarized through racial hierarchies that further distance the white settler from blackness and indigeneity as animalized sites of tragedy, marginality, poverty, and primitivism. That is, black and Indigenous bodies are dehumanized and inscribed (and continually re-inscribed) with animal status—which is always a speciesist rendering of animality as injuring—to refuse humanness to people of color and colonized subjects. This not only commits a violence that re-locates racialized bodies to the margins of settler society as non-humans, but also performs an epistemic violence that denies animality its own subjectivity and re-makes it into a mode of being that can be re-made as blackness and indigeneity [18] (p. 32).

human domination. Although Robinson examines these legends to propose an Indigenous veganism that finds legitimacy in traditional Indigenous oral cultures, I want to center these non-speciesist human-animal intra-subjectivities in decolonial thought. This would also mobilize against settler colonialism as a project of necropolitics that “is accomplished... through purposeful and ignorant misrepresentations [and rejections] of Indigenous cosmologies” to legitimize Indigenous erasure [21] (p. 22). Several of the recommendations proposed by the animal liberation movement are thus applicable to decolonization. For example, rejecting animal experimentation, disrupting the commodification of animal bodies, and abolishing animal agriculture are gestures that can be deployed as anti-colonial gestures that reify decolonial futurities insofar as these forms of knowledge production, capitalism, and food culture sustain the settler state [11].

I however want to present an alternative to the abolitionist/citizenship debate circumscribing theorizations of animal domesticity to recognize the subjectivities of domesticated animals as colonized subjectivities [14] (p. 79). That is, Animal Rights Theory has traditionally operated through two polarized re-constructions of the domesticated animal.

First, scholars such as Gary Francione argue that domesticated animals inhabit hybrid and/or “unnatural” subjectivities that orient animal bodies as means to human ends. As a result of this unethical relationship, Francione proposes an eradication of the domesticated animal because the “intent of domestication” is and was intrinsically immoral [14] (pp. 78–79). Conversely, Donaldson and Kymlicka contend that this argument is itself speciesist and alternatively believe that a citizenship model can create human and domesticated animal interactions that are reciprocal and non-exploitative [14] (p. 79). Because I have already argued against Donaldson and Kymlicka’s citizenship model, I suggest that the erasure of domesticated animals would itself be a form of settler-colonial genocide in which colonized subjects are disappeared. However, it is important to note that settler colonialism constructs death differently for Indigenous and animal bodies. That is, settler colonialism requires the erasure of indigeneity through genocide or neoliberal processes of assimilation wherein the colonized subject symbolically abandons indigeneity for settler ways of living. Here, the corporeal and/or discursive refusal of indigeneity by the settler state legitimates settler claims to territory and political authority. On the other hand, settler colonialism wants to produce animal bodies as commodities embedded in a global economy of reiterated deathliness. Said different, animal bodies that are inserted into capitalist spaces of commodity production are always already scheduled for death to be consumed as meat, clothing, scientific data, and so forth [22] (p. 148).

Although animal domesticity “has been characterized by the coercive confinement, manipulation, and exploitation of animals for the benefit

oriented towards a politics of neoliberal citizenship and settler sovereignty.

Instead, they must be embedded in a politics of decolonization that recognizes the ways in which Indigenous bodies and epistemologies are literally at stake in statist re-imaginings of animality.

4. Indigenous Cosmologies, Domesticated Animal Bodies, and Decolonizing Gestures

Although Tuck and Yang argue that “decolonization is [only] accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity”, they cast decolonization within a discourse of anthropocentric struggle [5] (p. 35).

While decolonial thought has operated through a social ecologist framework that de-centers environmental violence and reclaims pre-contact constructions of non-human nature, I suggest that the recognition of animals as colonial subjects has been absent from Indigenous Studies. That is, contemporary decolonial thought has yet to engage with a politics of animality that not only recalls “traditional” and/or “ceremonial” human-animal relations, but is also accountable to animal subjectivities and futurities outside settler colonialism and within a project of decolonization. That is, decolonial thought cannot, for example, demand the repatriation of land as an ecofeminist praxis while simultaneously advocating for hunting as a recreational activity precisely because hunting has been weaponized as speciesism to normalize the killability of animals for human ends. Here, I propose a re-centering of animality through Indigenous cosmologies and epistemologies (specifically Mi’kmaq and Cree) to propose a decolonial animal ethic.

In *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer argues that the Old Testament narrativized anthropocentrism and speciesism through Christian cosmologies, thereby re-making “human life, and only human life” into a discursive and corporeal site of sacredness [10] (p. 191). I argue that a decolonial animal ethic must operate through a similar narrative logic by using Indigenous cosmologies as frameworks for a non-speciesist and anti-colonial animality. In “Veganism and Mi’kmaq Legends”, Margaret Robinson suggests Mi’kmaq cosmologies are shaped through “a model of creation in which animals are portrayed as our siblings” and thus share a symbiotic form of personhood with human figures [20] (p. 191). In the story of “Muin, The Bear’s Child”, for example, a young boy is raised by bears after being abandoned by his stepfather in a forest [20] (pp. 192–193). Animals are thus not only imagined as active agents in Indigenous mythologies but are also capable of creating kinship relations with other (human) animals. Further, many creation stories from my own Cree community cast animals (such as ravens) in the role of “Creator” or as the figure through which the Creator acts. Here, animals occupy sacred ceremonial roles from which the Earth and its occupants are created and are thus not subject to

While Maria Lugones suggests that the “modern colonial/gender system” locates animality on the bodies of colonized women to fortify the ontological particularities of white womanhood [19] (pp. 202–203), this argument is premised on the assumption that animality is an attribute (not a form of subjectivity) that violently reduces humanness to animality. My intention, however, is to trace the ways in which anthropocentrism is weaponized as white supremacy and to disrupt the speciesist logic that circumscribes anti-colonial theorizations of animality. Although Smith refers specifically to the ways in which blackness is made enslaveable to anchor capitalism, she also reminds us that “the capitalist system ultimately commodifies all” bodies [2] (p. 2). In that sense, the speciesist re-signification of the animal body as a laboring body within economies of food and commodity production further attaches the animal to the settler state. If settler colonialism and white supremacy mobilize through anthropocentrism (and they do) and capitalism requires the acquisition of Indigenous lands for animal agriculture (and it does), then decolonization is only possible through an animal ethic that disrupts anthropocentrism as a settler-colonial logic.

3. Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Animal Recognition

In *Zoopolis*, Donaldson and Kymlicka re-cast animality within the language of “political and cultural membership” to propose a non-speciesist and deontological re-figuring of human-animal relations that models contemporary applications of neoliberal citizenship [14] (p. 14). Donaldson and Kymlicka suggest that Animal Rights Theory has failed to think beyond negative rights (i.e., the right not to be killed or confined), and therefore argue that “animals, like humans, should be seen as possessing certain inviolable rights” as determined by doctrines of human rights [14] (pp. 4–6). Here, Donaldson and Kymlicka envisage new human-animal relational duties by re-categorizing domesticated animals as citizens, feral animals as denizens, and wild animals as members of sovereign nations [14] (p. 13). Although the latter categorizations have implications for Indigenous peoples’ claims to territorial permanence and political autonomy, I contend that the recognition, or rather, misrecognition of domesticated animal subjectivities re-colonizes the animal body to foreclose it within settler-colonial infrastructures of subjecthood and governmentality.

That is, *Zoopolis* militarizes recognition as the hegemonic mode of animal activism to further entrench settler citizenship as the *prima facie* mode of post-political and post-colonial existence. Here, settler colonialism is only afforded a future—that is, it only becomes tangible and prophetic—by locating itself on the bodies of settler citizens that are always already culturally and corporeally not Indigenous.

The problem with settler citizenship as a model for animality is that it operationalizes animal bodies as “sites of... phantasmatic” settler promise [6]

(p. 89). In other words, the animal body is re-made into “the mechanism by which certain sanctioned fantasies... are insidiously elevated as the parameters of realness” [6] (p. 89). That is, the animal body’s entrance into discourses of settler citizenship reproduces the assumed facticity of the settler state as the de facto technology of post-colonial power (as if colonialism is an historicized and finalized event). In this context, settler colonialism mobilizes as a non-violent apparatus “to produce forms of life that make settler colonialism’s constitutive hierarchies seems natural” [8] (p. 152). Here, settler colonialism generates life forms that interpellate settler presents and settler futures by re-locating indigeneity to the threshold of settler society as the frame of reference against which settler citizens are constructed.

I therefore reject the colonial politics of animal recognition proposed by Donaldson and Kymlicka because it operates within—and consequently upholds—colonial infrastructures of settler citizenship and neoliberal subjecthood that re-orient animal bodies as the mundane surfaces on which settler colonialism is discursively reified. I appropriate Coulthard’s “politics of recognition” to suggest that Donaldson and Kymlicka “reproduce the very configurations of colonial power” that require the erasure and/or assimilation of Indigenous peoples to re-situate animal bodies into settler political discourses [7] (p. 437).

Donaldson and Kymlicka argue that domesticated animals should be conferred citizenship because they “are members of our society” with the “capacity to have and express a subjective good, to participate, and to cooperate” in settler-colonial politics [14] (p. 122). This, in effect, re-makes animals as subjects of neoliberalism (i.e., as objects of speciesism within political economies of violence) into neoliberal subjects (i.e., as bodies that interpellate neoliberalism as a political mechanism). As Donaldson and Kymlicka frame “citizenship [as] a cooperative social project... in which all are recognized as equals” and “all benefit from the goods of social life” [14] (p. 137), settler citizenship is centered as if it were a post-racial concept that is operationalized within homogenized and post-political landscapes of neoliberal pluralism. That is, settler citizenship is romanticized as if the state governs from a universalized space of sameness that is not characteristically violent and racist.

As a neoliberal delusion of progress that repackages colonial domination by vacating anthropocentrism from political rhetoric without questioning the very parameters through which such rhetoric is militarized against Indigenous peoples [7] (p. 447), Donaldson and Kymlicka’s citizenship model forecloses radical Indigenous responses to state violence by diffusing settler colonialism’s discursive and corporeal particularities.

This framework then jeopardizes decolonial projects that contest the genocidal model in which “everything within a settler colonial society strains to destroy or assimilate the Native in order to disappear them from the land” [5] (p.

9). Precisely because decolonization “sets out to change the order of the world” as “an agenda for total disorder” [11] (p. 2), a politics of neoliberal animal citizenship is antithetical to decolonization because it reproduces settler sovereignty and normalizes the very structure(s) against which Indigenous peoples have mobilized.

Thus, that which is knowable through Donaldson and Kymlicka’s colonial politics of animal recognition is a neoliberal justice that constitutes and is constituted by settler fantasies of animal re-subjectification as Indigenous erasure and settler sovereignty.

I thus suggest that Donaldson and Kymlicka’s theory of domesticated animal citizenship is in actuality a politics of “strategic domestication” in which animal subjectivities are circumscribed by “the terms of recognition in such a way that the foundation of” settler society is “relatively undisturbed” and further compartmentalized [7] (p. 451). I contend that this re-building of animal ontologies and human-animal relations within the language of citizenship cannot disrupt those power mechanisms (i.e., capitalism, settler colonialism, and white supremacy) that require the oppression of both Indigenous and animal bodies. That is, the explicit gesture toward “social and political integration” advocated in Zoopolis locates animals (as colonized subjects with settler citizenship) within symbolic and literal spaces of settler coloniality [14] (p. 153). For instance, Donaldson and Kymlicka argue that the criminal (in)justice system should be expanded to better “protect” animal bodies as co-citizens [14] (p. 132). Imagining the criminal (in)justice system through analytics such as deterrence, “deserved retribution”, and “protection of basic rights” [14] (p. 132),

Donaldson and Kymlicka adopt a carceral neoliberalism in which animals as settler citizens are afforded the privilege of state protection while other bodies (namely Indigenous and black bodies) are subject to police violence and incarceration as white supremacist tactics of dislocation, dispossession, and disappearance. That is, the normalization of prisons as settler-colonized spaces works to physically remove people of color from public spaces that are mediated by logics of white supremacy and white privilege. This resultantly substitutes forms of economic and/or speciesist violence (i.e., animal abuse) for the racialized violence of the prison industrial complex as a settler-colonial mechanism. A decolonized animal ethic would instead recognize the ways in which settler sovereignty is prophesized and exclusivized by a politics of carcerality that is a “weapon of whiteness” through which Indigenous peoples “disappear into whiteness” [2] (p. 6). Here, I reject Donaldson and Kymlicka’s utopian construction of neoliberal democratic citizenship as fundamentally “equal” to remind readers that all infrastructures and logics of settler colonialism (i.e., political participation, capitalism, and carcerality) always mobilize against Indigenous bodies as genocidal and assimilationist gestures [14] (p. 155). For that reason, modern re-configurations of animality cannot be